

Healthy Living: Diabetes Care during Sick Days¹

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When you are sick, your blood glucose levels are harder to regulate. Being sick often causes blood glucose levels to rise which can lead to serious health conditions. It's important to have a plan on how to manage your sick days so you are prepared ahead of time. Read on to learn more!

Take Your Diabetes Medicines

It's important to take your insulin or oral diabetes medications even if you aren't eating as much as usual. Your blood glucose goes up when you are sick, so you may need more medication than usual. Your diabetes care team can help you regulate your medications when you are sick.

Check Blood Glucose and Urine Ketones

Check your blood glucose levels more often than usual when you are sick. If you have type 1 diabetes, measure your blood glucose and urine ketones every four hours.

If you have type 2 diabetes, check your blood glucose at least four times a day (about every three hours). You should measure urine ketones if your blood glucose is higher than 300, or as directed by your health care provider.

Choose the Right Cold Medicine

Some over-the-counter cold and flu medicines can affect blood glucose. Ask your pharmacist or health care provider about the best medication to take.

Keep the right medicines on hand so you are prepared in case you get sick.

Eat and Drink

Stick to your regular meal plan if you can. If not, try to get your normal amount of calories by eating foods that are easy on the stomach like regular (not diet) gelatin, crackers, soup, and applesauce.

It's very important to drink a glass of liquid (alcohol-free and caffeine-free) every hour when you are sick.

Sick Day Foods

Be prepared for sick days by having some of these foods and drinks on hand. Each one contains ten to fifteen grams of carbohydrates.

- 1 double-stick popsicle
- 1 cup sports drink
- 1 cup milk
- 1 cup soup
- ½ cup fruit juice or regular (not diet) soda
- ½ cup lemonade
- 6 saltine crackers

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- 5 vanilla wafers
- 3 graham crackers
- 1 slice toast
- ½ cup cooked cereal
- ½ cup mashed potatoes
- ⅓ cup frozen yogurt
- ½ cup regular ice cream
- ¼ cup sherbet
- ½ cup regular (not diet) gelatin
- ¼ cup regular pudding
- ½ cup sugar-free pudding

When to Call Your Diabetes Team

- You’ve been sick or have had a fever for two days and aren’t getting better.
- You’ve been vomiting or have had diarrhea for six hours or more.
- You can’t keep even small amounts of clear liquids down.
- You have moderate or high levels of ketones in your urine.
- Your glucose levels are higher than 240mg/dl, even though you’ve taken extra insulin according to your sick-day plan.
- You take diabetes medications, and your glucose level is more than 240mg/dl before meals and stays there for more than twenty-four hours.
- Your chest hurts, you have trouble breathing, your breath smells fruity, or your lips or tongue are dry and cracked.
- You don’t know what to do to take care of yourself.

For more information:

National Diabetes Education Program: <http://ndep.nih.gov/>

Florida Extension website: <http://solutionsforyourlife.ufl.edu>

Make a Plan

Work with your diabetes care team to make a plan for your sick days.

Diabetes medications for sick days:

How often to measure blood glucose:

How often to measure urine ketones:

What cold or flu medicines to take:

Meal plan:

Important phone numbers:
